

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Wallace Tamashiro

Wallace Tamashiro was born in 1938, in Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi. His parents, Richard Buichi Tamashiro and Shizuko Tamashiro, were both born in Waipahu, Oʻahu, and spent some of their formative years in Okinawa, Japan. Married in 1937 on Oʻahu, they raised a family on the island of Lānaʻi.

Wallace Tamashiro, the eldest of four children, attended: Lānaʻi High and Elementary School, Waipahu Elementary School, and Mid-Pacific Institute. During breaks in the school year, he helped at the family business, Richard's Shopping Center, a general merchandise store founded by his father in Lānaʻi City in 1946. He made deliveries and unloaded freight.

After graduating from the University of Hawaiʻi, he spent some time working in California.

He returned to Lānaʻi at the request of his father who needed help running not only the store, but a bowling alley and theater. From 1967, Wallace Tamashiro helped run Richard's Shopping Center until it was sold to David Murdock in 2006.

He and his wife, Nancy, still reside in the same home in Lānaʻi that they purchased in 1971.

Tape No. 56-34-1-13

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Wallace Tamashiro (WT)

Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi

February 27, 2013

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: WN restarts interview.]

WN: Interview with Wallace Tamashiro in Lānaʻi City. Interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. Today is February 27, 2013. This is for the Lānaʻi City oral history project.

So, Wallace, again, good morning.

WT: Good morning, Warren.

WN: Okay. Again, first question, what year were you born and where were you born?

WT: Okay. I was born on Lānaʻi, 1938. I think I am the only one still on Lānaʻi, that was born in 1938. I think most of my classmates moved out after high school.

WN: I'll ask you later on about the people moving out. But right now, I want to ask you about your father. What is his background and what is his name, first of all?

WT: My father's name was Buichi Tamashiro. Along the way, I guess, he picked up Richard. Both he and my mom [Shizuko Tamashiro] were born in Waipahu [Oʻahu]. They were like neighbors, I would say. His first experience with Lānaʻi was working on the Inter-Island [Steam Navigation Co, Ltd.] boat coming to Lānaʻi. I think he moved to Lānaʻi because, he told me, his uncle, far-off relative, had a pig farm on Lānaʻi. So he came to Lānaʻi to work for his uncle. Then, after that, he hooked up with [T.] Okamoto Store as a butcher, I think.

WN: Okay, so you said he became a butcher at Okamoto Store.

WT: Yeah, he became a butcher at Okamoto Store. When World War II broke out, the people who came in to take over Okamoto Store had a branch store, I believe, in Hickam Air Force Base. So our whole family moved to Oʻahu and we stayed in Waipahu. But he must have stayed in Honolulu because of the commute from Waipahu to Hickam. So he used to come to Waipahu on weekends and spend time, I guess. But I was only about five or six years old, so I don't recall too much.

WN: What years did you actually spend in Waipahu?

WT: I guess I was there about 1943 or [19]44, maybe about a year. Then I came back to Lāna‘i. I know I started first grade over here. Then when I was in the fifth grade, I went to Waipahu Elementary School, fifth and sixth grade because I had treatment for my sinus and my asthma. So I stayed in Honolulu for fifth and sixth grade. I came back to Lāna‘i, seventh and eighth [grades at Lāna‘i High and Elementary School]. Then because of my asthma, probably one reason was because of my asthma, I moved to Honolulu and I went to Mid-Pac [Mid-Pacific Institute] as a boarder. I had lot of relatives in Waipahu. I had a cousin going to Mid-Pac, also. So I went to Mid-Pac for four years. I graduated in 1956.

WN: Right. And so, you were born in Lāna‘i. Your father was born in Waipahu.

WT: Yes, he was born in Waipahu.

WN: And he was sort of going back and forth? Is that it?

WT: As I said, that one year or so, we all moved to [O‘ahu]. He stayed in Honolulu. So it was near to where his working place was.

WN: It was Hickam?

WT: Yes, Hickam. So then he used to come to Waipahu maybe on weekends. Then we moved back to Lāna‘i.

WN: I see. What was the name of that store in Hickam?

WT: The store was [in the Hickam Shopping Center. And that’s a [branch of the] store that was on Lāna‘i after Okamoto Store closed down.

WN: Okay. So it was Okamoto Store, and then it became MerMart eventually.

WT: When MerMart moved out, at about the same time, my father had a store where Pine Isle Market is now. I think in 1946, he operated the store where Pine Isle is now. In the early 1950s when MerMart moved out, we moved into that building where Richard’s Market is now. The name Richard’s Shopping Center, he told me he picked that name up because where he worked at Hickam, that small shopping area was called Hickam Shopping Center. It had a flower shop, I guess, the butcher shop, and a cleaning place. I don’t know what else. That’s why he just picked up that name and just put Richard’s [Shopping Center].

WN: So when he was doing the Pine Isle Market, was it called Richard’s Shopping Center?

WT: Yes. He had the same name. When we sold the business to David Murdock, they wanted to keep [it as] Richard’s Shopping Center, but because of all the paperwork and whatnot, I said no.

They said, “How about Richard’s Market?”

I said, “Fine with me.” You know, I don’t care. At that time, we just wanted to get out. You know, close up . . .

WN: This is back in [20]06?

WT: This was 2006.

- WN: Okay, so little bit of background on Richard's Shopping Center. He started actually in 1946, yeah?
- WT: Correct.
- WN: Did he tell you like why or how he got started?
- WT: Well, the story he told me was that Dexter ["Blue"] Fraser, was the [Hawaiian Pineapple Company's Lāna'i] Plantation manager at that time. The plantation manager, I guess, would be like a king. So he asked my father if he wanted to own his own business. My father said yes, but he didn't have money. So he [Fraser] said, "Parts of it, you don't have to worry." The company will help him. So I don't know in what way. I don't know if they gave him a break in rent or what. He [father] borrowed merchandise and I guess he got financial assistance from relatives in Waipahu. That's how he started.
- WN: You said he had a background as a butcher?
- WT: Yeah, because when he first came, his so-called uncle by the name of [Masei] Ikehara ran the pig farm right below Lālākoa I. He worked at the piggery, and I guess that's where he learned to kill pigs. That Ikehara closed the pig farm in 1938 because the company opened a piggery down Pālāwai Basin. I don't know what happened to the man. Anyway, from there, my father worked for Okamoto Store.
- WN: What did he do at Okamoto Store?
- WT: I think he was a butcher or just whatever they had to do.
- WN: What did you hear about Okamoto Store? What kind of store was it?
- WT: I think it was primarily a grocery store for the plantation workers. I don't recall too much about that store, but it must have been in a small country town. It was basically just subsistence [supplying] the basic needs of the community.
- WN: What do you know about your father's ties to Okinawa in terms of his parents? Where was he born?
- WT: My father was born in Waipahu. But I think he went back to Okinawa, when he was young. Actually, his first language was Japanese. He was more fluent in Japanese than English.
- WN: You said he was born in Waipahu, but he went back.
- WT: I don't know what years he went back. A lot of his history and my uncles' history, his brothers, we don't know too much.
- WN: But he went back to Okinawa for school?
- WT: I think so. In fact, I think he went back to Japan for school.
- WN: Oh, Japan? Okay.
- WT: Because I know he could read and write in Japanese. [In Okinawa as well as Japan, the language of instruction was Japanese.] The conversation in our home between he and my mom were all in

Japanese, mostly in Japanese, when we were growing up. So I still can understand some, but I cannot speak it.

WN: Did they speak Okinawan *ben*, too?

WT: No, no. Regular Japanese.

WN: Do you know anything about his parents?

WT: Well, his father, I didn't know him. He left Waipahu, went back to Okinawa. My grandmother stayed in Waipahu, but she had married my step-grandfather. My step-grandfather was just like my real grandfather because I didn't know my biological grandfather. They lived in Waipahu. I think they died in their late sixties or seventies.

WN: Do you know what part of Okinawa they're from? Your grandparents.

WT: Yes, the family's [from] Yonabaru. I still have a first cousin there and his kids. I went to visit Okinawa when I was stationed in Korea. I took a week's leave and I went to visit them.

WN: Okay, so your father started Richard's Shopping Center in 1946 near where the Pine Isle Market is. Then eventually in the [19]50s moved to the eventual location?

WT: Yes.

WN: Okay. Tell me about your mother.

WT: My mother was sent back to Okinawa, I believe, when she was about two years old. She came back when she was about twelve. That was because her father died and my grandfather Zempan Arakawa, his wife died. They got together, so my grandma had my mother and my grandpa had a boy and a girl, my aunt and uncle. So the three of them went back to Okinawa. They were about the same age. So they were sent back to Okinawa and then came back later on.

WN: So these were the older siblings?

WT: Yes. My aunts and uncles.

WN: This is Arakawa Store [i.e., Arakawa's]?

WT: Yeah. My mother was the half-sister to my aunts and uncles.

WN: I see. And what was her name?

WT: My mother's name was Shizuko.

WN: Shizuko Arakawa?

WT: No. Her name was Tamanaha.

WN: Oh, okay.

WT: You know, those days, she didn't tell us. We found out by ourselves. At certain times, you need a birth certificate, right? You're reading the birth certificate and you're thinking how come my

mother's maiden name was Tamanaha and all your relatives or grandfather, whatnot, is Arakawa. So this was maybe when I was sixth grade or seventh. But we never asked and they never told. So we kind of like found out on our own how this thing came out.

WN: When did they get married, your mother and father? Do you know?

WT: Must be [19]37, I hope. I was born in [19]38.

(Laughter)

WT: I researched that. They got married in [19]37. I was born in November [19]38.

WN: Okay, so what are the earliest recollections of growing up over here in Lānaʻi? What do you remember?

WT: Well, I remember it rained a lot. Then I couldn't go outside because at that time we didn't have paved roads. Everything was muddy. At a young age you learn how to walk wearing a *geta* because of the mud. Of course, to take a bath we have to walk to the bathhouse. Other than that, going to school. I know there was a bus furnished by the company that went around the neighborhood picking up kids even if the school was less than a mile away. I think this was only for the younger kids. I remember not wanting to go because I didn't know anybody.

WN: You mean, this is from five years old?

WT: Yes. I didn't want to go to school. So I never went to kindergarten. I don't know why. Maybe I was the firstborn so my mother felt, oh, okay, leave him home.

WN: So from five years old you were in Waipahu?

WT: Yes, about that time.

WN: Okay. So where did you folks live?

WT: We lived with my father's parents in Waipahu.

WN: Well, in Lānaʻi, though, where did you . . .

WT: Oh, in Lānaʻi, my father rented a plantation house. It was a rental. In fact, it's where the Lānaʻi Credit Union is now. It was in that area. In fact, part of the yard of the credit union, I think, is where I lived before. It was a plantation house and was walled off in half. So one family lived on one side and we lived on the other side. Our neighbor, I know, he owned the *tofu-ya* on Lānaʻi.

WN: What was it called? What was your neighbor's name?

WT: Ah, my neighbor's name was. . . . I can't remember but I know it will come maybe an hour from now, I don't know.

WN: Maybe later on. That's okay.

WT: Oh, Hirakawa.

WN: So this is *Naichi*, then, family?

WT: Yes, the man [Jugoro Hirakawa] had two boys. I know one of them for a short while he [Hirakawa's son] worked for my father. But I think after, the son joined the army with the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team].

My childhood, cannot remember too much. I know I went to school in Waipahu. That was a fun time, too. Walking from Depot Road to Waipahu Elementary every morning barefoot.

WN: So your house was on Depot Road in Waipahu?

WT: When I was going to school, fifth and sixth grade.

WN: Oh, later on, yeah, okay.

WT: I lived with my aunt and uncle.

WN: You were telling me about the house [on Lāna'i] that was split.

WT: In half, yeah.

WN: That's right. So you folks didn't live near the store or in the store at all?

WT: That first house was very close to the store. That's where my father worked. Then when he owned the store where Pine Isle [Market] is, we lived maybe about a block away.

WN: Okay. So you moved.

WT: We moved again, yes.

WN: So when he was at Okamoto Store, you folks lived in one place. When the store moved to Pine Isle . . .

WT: Pine Isle. We moved about a block away. Then because they tore down about four houses in that row, and then they tore down a few houses where International [Food and Clothing Center] is. We moved about a block away. We still had to go to outhouse, even. . . . I think the toilet in the house came in about the [19]40s, very late [19]40s, maybe [19]48 or [19]49. Everybody had. I was surprised when I came home from Waipahu one Christmas and they had indoor toilet and the heater for the hot water. We had kerosene stove, too. My mother used to tell me, "Go home, cook rice." So no more [automatic] rice pot, but we used to go cook [on a] stove. I learned that.

WN: So you cooked rice on the kerosene stove?

WT: Right.

WN: Was it like the *kama*, the big . . .

WT: Just a regular pot.

WN: So, okay, you cooked rice. What else did you do? What kind of chores did you have around the house?

WT: You know what? My mother raised chickens a ways away from our house. But we had to go feed the chickens and I hated that because the shit smelled. I couldn't eat eggs until maybe I was about

fifteen years old. Because I used to see the poop on the eggs. (WN chuckles.) Of course, they washed it off, but I didn't want to eat eggs. So that's what I remember.

WN: Was gathering the eggs part of your job?

WT: Picking up eggs, cutting—I don't know, they used to call it "chicken grass." There must be a name for it now. We had a knife screwed on a wood and we used to chop—they used to call "chicken grass"—and mix 'em with the chicken feed. Then we used to feed the chicken, give 'em water. That was punishment.

WN: (Chuckles) Now, she raised the chicken mostly for eggs?

WT: No, I think my mother used to sell 'em.

WN: Oh, sell the eggs or sell the chickens?

WT: She used to sell the chicken, too. Because people used to come over and they wanted the live chicken. So she used to sell the live chicken. They used to cut it themselves. They like the blood, right? Just cut the neck and all the blood comes out. I guess they liked the fresh chicken. It was real fresh. Live.

WN: How did she sell 'em? Did she sell 'em at the store or from the house?

WT: No, that was her part-time job. (Chuckles) Even when we moved near the store, she had chickens, too. I don't know if that was in the blood or not. Because I remember my grandfather in Waipahu, he used to tend to his chickens every day.

WN: This is Zempan [Arakawa]?

WT: Yes.

WN: Wow. Yeah?

WT: I know my uncle said, I don't know, at one time he had about 200 chickens. Shigemi Arakawa [WT's uncle]. So I don't know if that must be in the blood.

(Laughter)

WN: About how many chickens did your mother have?

WT: She had only two coops so maybe about six [chickens]. I think my brother took after her because right now he has three chickens in his yard today—2013. (WN laughs.) He has brown eggs.

WN: Okay, you said your job was to feed the chickens, cut the chicken grass . . .

WT: That didn't last too long. Only when I was on Lāna'i.

WN: What else did you do? What other jobs did you have?

WT: Of course, we helped in the store. You know, delivery boys.

WN: Okay, so how many of you were there? Three boys, one girl. So you were the oldest.

WT: Yes.

WN: Okay.

WT: But I was away. Fifth and sixth grade, I was away. So when I was away—when I was in the sixth grade, my brothers were only fourth grade and second grade. And my sister. But they grew up over here. So they spent a lot of time helping in the business from when they were young. I was here seventh and eighth grade.

WN: That's right. You were . . .

WT: He made me be a bag boy. You know why? Before, everything came from outside. Bread came from Honolulu and Maui. Milk came from Honolulu and Maui. *Poi* came from Honolulu. The planes all didn't come at one certain time. The Maui freight came in, the Honolulu freight came in, you know. We used to deliver to the Harbor Camp three days a week maybe. We used to deliver up the [Lānaʻi] Ranch maybe three days a week. In the community, we might deliver maybe four or five times a day. People call in the order, say, before lunch. Then we go out. Maybe in the afternoon, we go out about two times, three times. At the same time you got to go deliver the milk or else you got to store it away, right? So we had the milk run, the bread run. Sometimes you tie it in all together. But it was like precision. We had one driver. We knew exactly what each house had. So drop off, run, drop off to another guy. The truck just kept on going. By the time he just waited, everybody ran down. We were young. I think all my cousins helped, too. Of course, I was away when my cousins were in their teens, so.

WN: So when you say "milk run," "bread run," that means what? Going to pick up?

WT: No, we had to deliver to the houses.

WN: Oh, okay. So how did it work now? How did people get their goods back in the early days?

WT: People [who needed] milk and bread and *poi*, they had what you call "standing order." Every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, same. Maybe Monday is a different quantity than a Wednesday or Friday. We had 'em all on paper, which house. We used to go out by the area and just keep on going, all around the town.

WN: So automatically you would deliver?

WT: Right. Unless there was a cancellation.

WN: I see. So they had to call you to cancel?

WT: Yes. When the plane came in late, you got to deliver late, too. Sometimes you deliver late, the guy [i.e., customer] is sleeping already. Sometimes six o'clock [PM], they sleeping with the door locked. Of course, lot of 'em didn't lock their door, so that was good. Just put 'em in the door.

WN: So you would go directly to the airport, pick up the milk . . .

WT: And bring it back and sort 'em out.

WN: I see. So by that time, you remember was all by air?

WT: Yes.

- WN: What about down the wharf?
- WT: I can remember in my early age, lot of stuff came in from Maui on the boat. They had the *Nai'a*, I think. Anyway, we had to go down to the harbor. Not “we,” people that my father hired. They went down, then brought ’em up.
- WN: So standing orders were milk, bread and *poi*.
- WT: Yes.
- WN: Rice?
- WT: No, no. Just the real perishable stuff.
- WN: So when you were really young, what were your jobs? You said bag boy.
- WT: Well really young was seventh grade, eighth grade. That was old already (chuckles). Well, bag boy and delivery. We didn’t serve the customers. I mentioned we had a lot of charge accounts. The store held the accounts.
- WN: Yeah. Tell me how that worked.
- WT: If you didn’t know the name of a person, we had a *bangō* list.
- WN: Oh, *bangō*.
- WT: Yeah, *bangō* numbers. So we went by that, too. So we had a list if the guy could charge or not. For those people with the same last names and the first name started with the same letter, we went by *bangō* numbers so that there was no confusion. Like there was this Hokama family. I know one was Chokame and the other one was C. I cannot remember the names, but two C. Hokama. So one was 808 and [the other] was 443. Same with the name Oda, O-D-A. There was an M, Minoru, and I don’t know the other one, M-something. So I know we had 949 and some other number that I cannot remember. I used to know ’em until two years ago. (WN laughs.) Oh, 1449 Oda and 949 Oda.
- WN: Oh, so you actually had a list of names and *bangō* numbers?
- WT: Yes. I don’t know where we got that from. I think it must have come from the company, the office.
- WN: So in order to charge, they had to work for the company and have a *bangō* number?
- WT: No, not necessarily. Because you had schoolteachers, too. So, most of the company employees.
- WN: So a schoolteacher . . .
- WT: We had a bigger population and a lot of single people. So by face, you don’t know a lot of people.
- WN: Right.
- WT: As time went on, you know who was who already. Because the guys who came and shopped were almost the same guys, you know.

- WN: So how did it work? They would come in and get whatever items they wanted?
- WT: They charged.
- WN: Today we have charge cards, but how did it work in those days?
- WT: No, you have to write 'em down. It was labor-intensive. We had a charge book with lines: one bread, one milk, two Vienna sausage, one Spam, or whatever. Then you tally it up in your head. Of course, we make mistakes, but we send 'em to our so-called office and they have the calculator. So any mistakes, they catch it and they put in the [sales] tax. Of course, the cash customers, you got to do it quick, too. Always we didn't have any machine at the counter. You had to be able to do it—add 'em in . . .
- WN: In your head.
- WT: And then add the tax, too.
- WN: Okay, so you would write out in the book and then what? Give them a copy, receipt, and then keep the other copy?
- WT: Yes. We had three copies. One for the customer, two in the office. At the end of the month, one copy—maybe if a guy charge, some guys had lot of slips. Some guys, if they come to the store about three times a week, that's [a lot of slips], you know. Then the milk, too, you got to put 'em down even if they don't come to the store because it's a standing order.
- WN: Right, right.
- WT: Then at the end of the month, you tally all that. We always retain one copy. You know what I mean? So the amount was posted and the bookkeeping was done. Then we used to mail 'em out.
- WN: And they would mail back payment?
- WT: Or they would drop in. Some would pick 'em up at the store. We didn't mail out all. You were talking about "new month"?
- WN: "New month," yeah.
- WT: From the twenty-fifth of the month, we charged [new purchases] to the next month's billing.
- WN: Ah, okay.
- WT: So actually, "new month," it just meant you didn't go by one to thirty or thirty-one. You went from maybe twenty-six to the twenty-five [of each month]. You know. So was all thirty days.
- WN: So people would like to come after the twenty-fifth so they don't have to pay [until the end of the following month].
- WT: Yeah, they can say, "Oh, I'll . . ."
- WN: They can pay the following month.
- WT: Yes, the following month.

WN: And what did you folks do with those who didn't pay?

WT: For those who didn't pay? Well, first we stop the account. We gave them time to pay. Of course, some, we had to send 'em to the collector.

WN: So you guys didn't work with the company at all?

WT: In our time, no. The company had no say. Because we heard of some deadbeat managers, too, with the company.

(Laughter)

So, they had no say, because we had all the responsibility.

WN: So you're saying then maybe your father's time was more involved with the company, you think?

WT: No, not really.

WN: Okay.

WT: That went out when the company used to take out the money [from workers using] payroll deduction?

WN: Right.

WT: I think after the union came in, that went out already. I don't know how long that lasted, the payroll deduction. You know, like they say, "company store"?

WN: Right.

WT: Yeah, we weren't a company store. I don't know about the Okamoto [Store's] time. I don't know how they did it.

WN: But by your time, it wasn't the company involved in it at all?

WT: No, it wasn't. But the company owned the building.

WN: What kind of restrictions did the company put on you and your father in running a business like that?

WT: As far as I know, they never interfered. When they started to bring in outside [field] workers from the Mainland, or wherever, they asked us if we could accommodate them. Because their wants were different, too. You know, some of the needs we didn't really have. So there was no pressure from the company in how we operated the business. In fact, I would say they gave us a good deal.

WN: So you paid rent to the company?

WT: We paid rent, but it was very fair. But as the idea of development started, then the people who came to manage the real estate side—the commercial activity side of the company—they started to . . . We saw a rent increase. Before, the pineapple people were managing the commercial [activity] and the business was growing pineapples. Not having to do with the commercial, other than rent. But when the real-estate arm of the company came in, we had a lease agreement and all

that. Before, we were all month-to-month for years. But then lot of people couldn't understand how we could operate on a month-to-month basis. But to us, that's how we [always] did business, right?

So the rent started to go up at that time, but it was still fair as the economy got better. But the economy got real good when [David] Murdock came in. First was construction. We used to sell maybe about half a dozen tape rules in three months. When construction came, we could sell about three dozen a month because of the construction workers. They damaged it; they lost it. The type of clientele customers changed. Before it was only people working in the pineapple field. Then when you had construction workers, they had different *kine* money, too, right? The age of the workers was different, too.

WN: They were, what, younger? Construction guys?

WT: They were younger, and it's different, a wider variety of people. So you could maybe sell more *poke*; you sell more chips. You know, just so they could eat more different *kine* stuff.

WN: So pineapple time, what were the main things that you sold?

WT: It was very basic: bread, milk, *poi*, Spam, eggs, mayonnaise, meat, pork . . .

WN: Fresh meat?

WT: Yes, fresh meat. We always used to bring in fresh meat from Maui.

WN: Was your father still butchering at that time when you were growing up?

WT: No. My father acted like the manager. He had his younger brother doing the butchering.

WN: So meat, pork, canned goods.

WT: Canned goods, meat, pork, chicken.

WN: What about like dry goods?

WT: We always tried to sell what we could sell. Like general merchandise. It was by customer demand, too. T-shirts, socks, underwear. We used to sell a lot of fabrics because a lot of people used to sew at that time. Then gradually I just got rid of the fabrics because of the age [of the clientele], yeah?

WN: What about work stuff?

WT: Yes. Work stuff.

WN: Tools?

WT: No. Tools, the company used to furnish everything: weeders, hoe, whatever. You know, they have the arm guards, work cover pants. The company had a storeroom. Basically, you could buy a lot of stuff from the storeroom. Because Castle & Cooke or Dole [Corporation] or whatever, they had accounts with all the suppliers. So they [workers] could go to the storeroom and order lumber, whatever, building materials, cement. Not too much on groceries, but most of the tools like that, I think. You know, like the wheelbarrow.

WN: What about work clothes?

WT: We used to sell. I used to sell jeans, like that. Because of what they wore, the cover pants, I think they could wear anything underneath.

WN: So things like the goggles and the hat?

WT: All from the company storeroom. But I used to sell straw hats. That's about it. Because all the eyewear, the arm guards, the leggings or whatever, the company used to furnish that.

WN: What about things like hunting and fishing things?

WT: We used to have fishing suppliers. And hunting. Well, at one time, we tried to sell bullets or ammunition, but it didn't go too well because we had to buy it from another place in Honolulu and the shipping [costs]. We used to sell knives but we didn't go into selling weapons, rifles and all that. Fishing stuff, we did. Some minor hardware and the basic household needs: light bulbs, whatever.

Even greeting cards, it kind of died out. There was no demand. We didn't have enough business, to tell you the truth, to sell greeting cards. I mean, you might come from someplace different, say, "How about a birthday card?"

"Oh, sorry, we don't have that. We don't sell it."

"How about a thank-you card?"

"No."

(Laughter)

WN: Who were your competitors at the time in the early years?

WT: Pine Isle Market.

WN: That was owned by who?

WT: Richard Honda and now, Kerry Honda, the son. International Food and Clothing [Center] by [Pedro] de la Cruz. Then at one time John Rabbon used to run Lāna'i City Service.

WN: All these stores sold the same basically . . .

WT: Basically the same. In size, I think we had the bigger physical facility.

WN: You folks were the biggest?

WT: In size. I don't know in terms of money. (Laughs)

WN: In inventory?

WT: We were heavy on the inventory because when pineapple was in season, we used to get barges like three, four times a week because of the in- and out-going. But we didn't know when certain things were coming in. We knew one, they call 'em the icehouse, where all the frozen and chilled

stuff came in. It came in once a week. But all the stores would combine in one [shipment] and was very small. So we used to air freight a lot. We used to go down to [Kaumālapa‘u] Harbor three, four times a week. Then when it was night shift, we had to go pick up the freight in the afternoon, at night.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

So when Young Brothers [Ltd.] came in, it was good for us. Once a week we knew they could bring in a lot.

WN: So, you know, there are three or four of you, stores, yeah? Did your clientele, was that basically different ethnicities going to different stores? Like International was de la Cruz? So did he get more Filipinos?

WT: I think he did. But we [all] had a mix of customers. So we couldn't really pinpoint. As times went by, we had more Filipino customers because a lot of them brought their families and wives over from the Philippines. Before, they were all single. So their needs were only this much. But when they had the family come in, their needs were different, too. The Filipino population is the biggest now. As the years went by, that's how it is. That's how it was.

WN: Did you sell more Filipino things? Foods, like *bagoong* or. . .

WT: No. They used to buy lot of the so-called Japanese canned goods. Now, today, in fact, even from ten years ago, there were more Filipino wholesalers coming into the market in Honolulu. So we had more choice than we could bring in. Prior to that, there were very few Filipino distributors. You say, you know, like the *bagoong*. There was a very limited amount of products that they imported. But I noticed in the last ten years—in fact today—a lot more merchandise from the Philippines.

WN: So it was pretty much multi or mixed?

WT: Yes, mixed.

WN: Did you do any advertising, early days?

WT: No, we didn't do that. The way I figure was that you stay on Lāna‘i for two hours, where all the businesses are and what they sell. So there was no need to advertise who you were, where you were. Everybody knew.

WN: So, getting away from the store a little bit, I wanted to ask you, what did you do to have good fun as a kid growing up on Lāna‘i?

WT: I guess I would say Boy Scouts. I joined Boy Scouts, I guess, from twelve? That was a fun time because even before that, we used to walk outside maybe almost the whole day and come home. I don't know if you know about Maunalei Gulch, but there's a big huge pipe going down. We used to climb down that pipe, go into the gulch.

WN: That's a water pipe?

WT: Yes. Then we used to pick *pepeiao* and walk back up on the pipe. On the top there's a tunnel to where the pipe used to go in. So we used to crawl through the tunnel, too. We used to walk up in

the mountains to go camping, Boy Scouts. Go down to Mānele, walk back from Mānele back to the city.

WN: *Pepeiao*, you're talking about mushroom?

WT: Yes, the Japanese, they call 'em— just like mushroom. *Pepeiao*.

WN: What did you folks do with that? I mean, how did you . . .

WT: You know what? I gave 'em to my father and they used to cook 'em. There's a Japanese word for that, but I don't know the name of that.

WN: Not *shītake* or . . .

WT: No, not *shītake*. Ah, next time I know. [The term is *kikurage*.]

WN: *Pepeiao*, okay. That's the Hawaiian word, yeah?

WT: Yes. Then we used to go to Maui for Boy Scout stuff. In those days, we had to get on the boat from Kaumālapa'u [Harbor] and go all around to Lahaina. That was a voyage, boy! Sick like heck. (WN chuckles.) Not like today. Speedboat, you know. Before, we just chugged along, rolling side to side. I think it took about four hours.

WN: What would you do on Maui?

WT: Oh, they had this Boy Scout Makahiki and all that. We went to the Maui County Fair. We pitched tent and stayed. Boy Scouting was the best when I was that age. But after you grew up a little bit, you got your car license, different story again.

WN: How old were you when you got your license?

WT: Fifteen. Already I was going to school in Honolulu and my aunt told me in Waipahu, "When you go home, get your license and you can use Uncle's car when you come back." I was thinking, Wow! (WN chuckles.) Now as I think back, that was very generous, right? You know, fifteen. I was fourteen and she's telling me, "When you go home, get your license and when you come back, you can use Uncle's car when you come for the weekend." (WN chuckles.) Amazing.

WN: But also, your father needed you to have your license, too, to help?

WT: At that time, no, because I was away for high school already.

WN: Oh, this was at Mid-Pac?

WT: Summertime I used to come back and I used to drive. But at that age, you like to drive, but you had to work, too. So that was all right.

WN: What about organized things like sports and stuff like that?

WT: Yeah, I used to play Little League baseball and whatnot. But that was seasonal, too. I can still remember those days, playing.

WN: So you went to Lāna'i [High and Elementary] School until [fourth] grade, right?

- WT: Yes. Fifth grade, and sixth grade I went to Waipahu [Elementary School].
- WN: So when you moved, do you remember how you felt when you were told you're going to move to Waipahu and live there?
- WT: Well, I had a cousin. He was only two years older than I am. I looked up to him at that age. He was close by so I didn't mind going back. He had friends around that place, too. There were a whole bunch of people growing up over there. I used to go during summers, too, so I kind of knew them. So I didn't mind going to school there.
- WN: What did you like better? Lānaʻi or Waipahu?
- WT: Well, at that time, I liked Waipahu. Even when I came back after my eighth-grade year, my father asked me if I wanted to go move to Mid-Pac. I said no, but after my eighth-grade year, I spent the summer in Waipahu, and when I came home, I wanted to go back. So I told my father, oh, I wanted to go Mid-Pac. So I went to Mid-Pac about two weeks later after school started.
- WN: Oh, this was, what, ninth grade?
- WT: That was ninth grade. That was 1953. I guess I had so much fun in Waipahu, I just wanted to go back and one way was going to Mid-Pac.
- (Laughter)
- That was a selfish reason.
- WN: What was good about Waipahu?
- WT: I don't know. Just the boys around and I guess more things to do. My uncles took me around. Because their children were young, too. My Uncle Goro [Arakawa] I remember him taking me to watch—I don't know if you know—Dado Marino over here. He was a boxer.
- WN: Yeah, a boxer.
- WT: Okay, he became the world champion. He took me to see that fight at the Honolulu Stadium. I still remember that because Dado Marino had roots tied to Lānaʻi. So he took me to that boxing match. These are the things that stand out in my mind. He took me to a UH [University of Hawaiʻi football] game. They played College of the Pacific, COP [today known as University of the Pacific], creamed UH something like 75-0.
- WN: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember that.
- WT: I remember him taking me to that game. The [COP] quarterback was Eddie LeBaron.
- WN: LeBaron.
- WT: Right? See? That was when I was fifth, sixth grade. I still can remember that. So that was part of the fun, enjoyable stuff. What I thought was, kind of neat.
- WN: Well, big thrill coming from Lānaʻi, too.

WT: Yes. I had that opportunity. My uncle used to go around the Arakawa's Store. They used to pack up a whole bunch of us and we used to go down to Nānākuli, Waipahu, and go house to house passing out their sale papers. We used to go down into the Kailua area, passing out papers, Kāne'ohe area.

WN: You mean, advertising Arakawa's?

WT: Yes. That was a job, but that was fun. Then he used to take us putt-putt golf down Waikīkī.

WN: So this is your uncle from your mother's side?

WT: Yes. But you're asking me what stood out when I was in Waipahu.

WN: Right, right.

WT: High school was different, too.

WN: Well, let me talk little bit about grade school on Lāna'i. What was that like, that Lāna'i [High and Elementary] School? Up until you left for Waipahu.

WT: Well, gee, I don't recall too much. I wasn't a good student anyway.

WN: So this was like first grade to fourth grade?

WT: I was first, second, third, fourth. For the four years, yeah.

WN: Right. Fifth grade, you went Waipahu.

WT: Five and six, yes. So one through four, I don't know too much. I know maybe the first grade, I was telling a friend of mine, the only thing I remember was, when the plane used to circle around the school, the *haole* teachers used to run out and the planes used to drop these sandbags with messages inside. Couple times when they ran out, I think one teacher left the sandbag on the desk. So we were looking at 'em. There's a pouch and I think like a strip of fabric going up. So that's what I remember. I don't remember school!

WN: (Laughs) What kind of messages? I mean . . .

WT: I don't know. I didn't read the message. Maybe we couldn't read at that time.

(Laughter)

First grade, you know. So I told this friend of mine, I said, "That's the only thing I remember."

We had a teacher. I cannot even remember who my first-grade teacher was. I know my fourth-grade teacher was Tomu Mitsunaga's wife. She was from the Mainland. I guess as I grew older, I can remember more. Then seventh grade, when I came back, there was this Mr. Yoshigai. I think he was in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team]. Got his teaching credentials. First year on the job, Lāna'i. I didn't see him until one time I was at UH and this guy was standing underneath a tree. And I say, "Ey, that's Mr. Yoshigai." So I went up to talk to him. I said, "Mr. Yoshigai, I don't know if you remember me, but Wallace Tamashiro. My father used to own the store."

I don't know if he said yes or no, but I asked him if he was still teaching. He said, "No, Lāna'i was my first and last teaching job." (WN laughs.) He had a hard time over here, I think.

I asked him, "What are you doing over here?"

I think he was working for the federal government investigating, doing background checks for people interested in whatever kind of job. So I had a short talk with him and never did see him after that again. This was about ten, twelve years later, I saw him. That was interesting.

WN: So coming back to Lāna'i School, seventh grade, after two years in Waipahu, how was that for you?

WN: Oh, I just blended in. It was just like nothing changed. The few friends I knew were still my friends. When you're younger, I think, you go to school, you know the people. You come home, if they don't live around you, you don't see them. Then I used to go to the [Lāna'i] Union Church, too. So the religion was different, too. There were not too many. Where I lived, I lived by myself. There was no other. They were only few blocks away, but I guess once you come home, you just stay in your house or you go down to the gym and play basketball or something. Tennis court.

WN: So after you were eighth grade Lāna'i School, you decided you wanted to go Mid-Pac.

WT: Yes. After the eighth-grade year, summertime, I went to Waipahu for the summer vacation. When I came home, I wanted to go back. So that's when I told my father, "I want to go to Mid-Pac." That's what happened.

WN: I guess Honolulu was in your blood, eh? (Chuckles)

WT: I don't know about Honolulu, but I guess the friends, the people you meet.

WN: So you were a dormer at Mid-Pac for four years. And you would come back to Lāna'i for summers?

WT: Summers and Christmas.

WN: When you were here for summers, what did you do?

WT: Helped in the store. Just do whatever we could do. Whatever we were told to do.

WN: Were there any times you wanted to do something else?

WT: Well, at that age, I thought I wanted to go pick pineapple with whoever the same age. But my father said, "No, help in the store."

WN: What kind of work did you do in the store?

WT: Just help deliver to the houses and maybe unload the freight. Clean up. That's about it. Bag boy. Other than that—and the Boy Scout, too, at that time.

WN: So as far as back as you remember, the store was always cash-and-carry. It was never. . .

WT: No. It was always charge. Cash-and-carry came about in '88, '89?

WN: Where they have to pay cash?

WT: Yes. Because there were too many different people coming in and I couldn't discriminate in giving out the credit. I didn't want to go through the trouble of checking if a person had good credit or not. So the best thing for me was go cash-and-carry. When I started, I lost some customers. That's how it went. But then my competitor Pine Isle [Market] went cash-and-carry the following year, I recall.

WN: I'll ask you that a little later. When I asked you about cash-and-carry, I meant more people can come in and pick what they want and go out. As opposed to calling in and you guys go deliver.

WT: For us, it was better if they came in and picked what they wanted.

WN: But some people did call?

WT: Yes. You had the same people calling all the time. Some people came in. A lot of people [still] didn't have cars at that time. They bought whatever they wanted, then had it delivered to their house.

WN: I see. So they would come in to pick out . . .

WT: Buy and we would maybe throw 'em in a box, write your name down, then deliver it later on.

WN: Okay. You know what? I want to stop over here and then . . .

WT: Almost eleven o'clock. We talked that long?

WN: . . . if we can continue another time. I wanted to ask you about the more modern times of the store.

WT: I'll be around.

WN: If that's okay.

WT: Yes.

WN: Okay. I'll go stop here.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 56-35-2-13

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Wallace Tamashiro (WT)

Lānaʻi City, Lānaʻi

March 21, 2013

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay. Today is March 21, 2013. This is Warren Nishimoto and I'm interviewing Wallace Tamashiro for our Lānaʻi City oral history project.

So good morning, Wallace.

WT: Good morning, Warren.

WN: This is our second session. Last time we had you talk about your small-kid days, helping your father in the store, moving back and forth between Lānaʻi and Waipahu, some of the things you used to do in Waipahu and in Lānaʻi. So we're getting you right to about [19]53 when you went to Honolulu for school. Can you tell us about that?

WT: Well, the summer of [19]53, I was in Waipahu. I had a lot of fun. I came back to Lānaʻi, but I didn't enjoy it because I was always thinking of Waipahu. My father wanted me to go to Mid-Pac anyway, but I didn't want to go.

WN: How come you didn't want to go?

WT: I don't know why. I just wasn't ready to go out. I just didn't want to leave Lānaʻi. But when I came back from that vacation during the summer, somehow I had such a good time and my cousin and some of his friends were there. They were going to Mid-Pac, so I told my father, "Yeah, I'm willing to go to Mid-Pac." So I went to Mid-Pac maybe a couple weeks after school started. I was a freshman at that time and I boarded there for four years. Had good fun, made some good friends. I don't know, academic-wise, I don't know if it helped me, but.

(Laughter)

That's it.

WN: Were there other Lānaʻi kids?

WT: There were. I believe I had one girl classmate from Lānaʻi. That was Miriam Matsui. Bob Tsumura was one year below me, and his sister was two years behind me. Ahead of me were Charles Ito and Fred Honda. I think that's about it. Charles Ito, he's back on Lānaʻi now. He's been back for about seventeen, eighteen years now. He came back to help his mom. But the mom

passed away, so. He's still here. I see him from time to time. Fred Honda passed away several years ago on the Mainland.

WN: I don't know if you knew it at the time, but as you look back at it now, would you consider being from Lāna'i and being able to go to Mid-Pac, was that like a special thing amongst the people here?

WT: I think that was a special thing because my uncles and aunts from Waipahu went there and I think my father went there for maybe half a year or one year. He wanted me to go there at first. So that's, basically, the reason why. Of course, he thought maybe the academics might be beneficial to me at that time, but being young, you don't realize that kind of stuff.

WN: Mid-Pac is college-prep, right? I'm just wondering, did your father or did you have any aspirations in terms of going to college?

WT: Well, at that time, when I first went, I didn't know anything about college-prep or whatever. But as the years went by, a lot of the older kids that were there went on to college. I know my cousin went on to college. So at that time, when you get to be a junior, senior—maybe for some people, earlier—college was on their minds. But for me, it wasn't. I don't know why. Maybe, like I said, I'm not smart enough.

(Laughter)

So I joined the [U.S.] Army for three years.

WN: Okay. Before we get to that, though, let's see, how often would you come back to Lāna'i?

WT: I came back every Christmas and every Easter, spring break, and summer. A lot of people thought I was just visiting Lāna'i. They didn't know I was part of the family, already, a few years away. Because I was away at Waipahu in my fifth- and sixth-grade years. So I came back in seventh and eighth. So I wasn't really around.

WN: When you were gone, like how was the store operating? Did they survive without you?
(Chuckles)

WT: Oh, you mean, when I was going to school? Oh, yes, definitely. My two brothers were here. Bobby, the one below me, is only two years below me. Collin is four years below me. They were here. They might make a comment that, "Oh, you weren't here. You didn't know what we used to do." You know what I mean? When they were twelve or fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. So I appreciate them, the work they were doing at that age.

WN: And they didn't go to Mid-Pac?

WT: No, they stayed here. I had a younger sister about six years below me, she went to Mid-Pac.

WN: So what were your memorable courses at Mid-Pac?

WT: I guess the courses that are memorable are the ones I didn't do good in.

(Laughter)

Like algebra, geometry, English. I wasn't a good student. I think I was ranked like almost at the bottom. So what can I do? I had a lot of fun, though, living in the dorm. You meet a lot of people from different places. You think about those people, but as you grow older, you don't have contact with too many unless you're active in alumni stuff, which I'm not.

WN: I'm wondering, what was dorm life like at Mid-Pac. Like at Lahainaluna [High School] where you have to do work?

WT: No, we didn't do any work. People had scholarships and I guess they reduced tuition for people working in the cafeteria or doing other types of work.

You mentioned Lahainaluna. My oldest went to Lahainaluna for two years, but we brought her back I think in her junior year. Because I think the life was too hard. You know, being a student and doing work early in the morning. We thought it was better to bring them back to Lāna'i. But they graduated from Lāna'i [High and Elementary] School. When the kids were growing up already in high school, my wife used to take them to Honolulu during the summer and had them go to summer school in Honolulu. So like the youngest went to summer school at 'Iolani, summer school at UH Laboratory School. I think she went to summer school at Punahou. We just wanted them to be exposed to the different lifestyles like other kids went through.

WN: So what year did you graduate from Mid-Pac?

WT: Nineteen fifty-six.

WN: Nineteen fifty-six. Okay. What happened after that?

WT: Well, after 1956 I got out and that year I was talking to my history teacher, high school. He asked me, "What you plan to do?"

I said, "I don't know."

He said, "A friend of mine," a classmate of his, "joined the army and he went to the [U.S.] Army finance school." He was just talking about his friend. This history teacher, his name was Les Cincade. I think he became the court administrator for the Hawai'i court system

WN: Yes. C-I-N-C-A-D-E.

WT: Yes. Les Cincade. He passed away at a young age. I think he was instrumental of me joining the army. So I went down to the recruiting station and I said I wanted to sign up and I wanted to sign up for this finance course, too. That's what I did. When I came home—my birthday is in November. So when I wanted to enlist, it was in July or June. So I had to have my father sign the paper. And he did not want to sign. I said, "No, you got to sign the paper. I don't want to do anything else." Eventually he signed the paper. So off I went. (Chuckles)

WN: What did he want you to do? Did he tell you?

WT: I think he wanted me to maybe work in the store, but I'm not sure. We never discussed it. So I took off. Spent three years.

WN: There was no draft back then at that time?

WT: There was a draft.

WN: There was a draft then at [19]56?

WT: So when I went in then I was only seventeen. When I got out, I was only twenty. The age of going into a bar was twenty-one. After three years, I still didn't have an ID that showed I was twenty-one so I could sit down and have a beer. Not that I was a drinker, but. So I went through that finance course. We had about thirty Hawai'i boys.

WN: Where was this?

WT: It was in Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana.

WN: Indianapolis, yeah?

WT: Outside of Indianapolis. So then after the school, I came back around Christmas. After a couple weeks, we were sent to Korea. We had about ten or twelve local boys in the office of maybe twenty-five in the finance department. I came back, I stayed in Schofield [Barracks] for a year.

WN: You also had basic training at Fort Lewis.

WT: Fort Lewis, Washington, basic training, then tech school in Indianapolis, then back to Hawai'i for a short leave, then we were all shipped to—not all—but twenty of us were shipped to Korea. Twelve of us remained at one place and the others went up to various posts in Korea. All we did was compute pay. Pay the troops.

WN: So these were the troops that were stationed in Korea?

WT: We were all payroll clerks.

WN: Payroll, I see. And you were discharged in [19]59?

WT: Yes, [19]59 I was discharged. That's the year of statehood, right?

WN: Right. What do you feel you learned from that experience in the army?

WT: You know, at that age, you were told what to do so you kind of like just followed orders and did what you had to do. I had fun. We had fun. I went to Japan couple times. I went to visit my relatives in Okinawa from when I was in Korea. When I was on the Mainland, the short time I was in Indianapolis, we went to Chicago. We were sent to Cincinnati. I don't know where else. In the short time, I saw different places. I didn't have much money so I couldn't go too often.

So my last six months when I was in Schofield, I went up to the U[niversity of Hawai'i] and I inquired about enrolling and took the tests. I was accepted. So I was in the business school.

WN: Did you have any plans at that time after UH or why did you do it?

WT: You know, I just wanted the paper so that I could show my parents that I could do it. Eventually I knew I was coming back to Lāna'i to help my parents [in the store]. That was the main thing. So in four-and-a-half years, I finished up.

WN: So you said you weren't a good student at Mid-Pac. You didn't really have any plans to go on to college so you joined the army. What made you feel you can get to UH and succeed over there?

WT: You know why? Because I think a lot of my friends were going to college. I don't know. As you grow older, at that time, I thought, "I'll try." You know what I mean? I didn't know if I would make it. So I went. I guess everybody says if you pass the first two years, all right. So after I passed the two years, I thought, wow, okay. So I just kept on going. Usually, lot of them finish in four years, right? But it took me another half year. That's all right.

WN: Fifty-nine to '63, yeah, you were at UH?

WT: Yes.

WN: Where did you live?

WT: At first, my first year, Bobby Tsumura and I rented an apartment where the McDonald's is on Beretania [Street]. Burger King is right across from McDonald's. So the owner of that place from Beretania to Young Street, he had a big property and he had rental units. Through Bobby's uncle, we found this place. So we stayed there for one year. You know, when you got to cook your own and this and that, it's not easy. So I just moved into a dorm on Isenberg Street. I stayed there for three years, I believe. At that time, too, you meet different people again.

WN: What dorm is this? Across from Mō'ili'ili Field?

WT: Yes.

WN: Oh, that's still there, yeah, the buildings?

WT: As you're going *mauka* on Isenberg, it's on the left, right across from the field.

WN: That was [run by] UH?

WT: No, that was a Hongwanji Buddhist dormitory.

WN: I see.

WT: But you didn't have to be Buddhist to go.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Oh, okay.

WT: I stayed there for about three years. Then my last half a year, I think I moved again. Three of us rented an apartment on the corner of. . . . What's the road going up to UH? That street?

WN: University [Avenue]?

WT: The corner of University [Avenue] and Kapi'olani [Boulevard]. Still there. So every time I pass, I say, "Oh, I used to live there."

WN: Oh, the apartments over there?

WT: Right on the corner.

WN: Oh, across from Marco Polo [condominium], then, now.

WT: Yes. As you come down from Kaimukī, it's on the corner of Kapi'olani and University. When you coming down from Kaimukī, it's just on the right side. If you make a right turn on University, it's on the right. Couple times, I remember that place, you know, Honolulu is kind of hot. You leave the sliding door open. You leave the screen door open. Sometimes people used to wander in and say—you know, drunk people—"Hey, where am I?" or "Can you call me a cab?" So (chuckles) that was kind of funny. (WN chuckles.) But I guess now days you got to be more careful than back then.

WN: Okay. So you graduated from UH in [19]63, and then what after that?

WT: Actually half a year in [19]64, yeah? I came back to Lāna'i. After a year, I went to the Mainland. My younger brother was in Pasadena [California] going to school. Then I went up there. He wasn't at the airport to pick me up. I went in the phone booth. I didn't know how to use the phone. The pay phone was different from the ones in Hawai'i.

(Laughter)

So I was fumbling; I was reading the directions. I wanted to get change, I guess. Then I saw him walking. This was in the arrival area. He said he was sleeping in the car. (WN chuckles.)

Anyway, I had some friends that had gone up to the Mainland earlier, so after several weeks, I called one of them up. After a few months, I moved in with the guy, several from Hawai'i. I moved to Gardena.

I worked for a small company that used to make airplane parts for the aircraft industry. Because one of the guys was like a foreman in that company. He asked me if I wanted a job. But all that time on the Mainland, about a year and a half, two years, why I wanted to go to the Mainland, I wanted to just see and go to football games, professional and baseball games. I went to see two World Series games. Three, in fact. So I saw three games. That was the highlight of my stay. You see where the Rams play.

WN: In the [Los Angeles] Coliseum?

WT: Yes. I didn't know anything about Las Vegas. But one time, when I first got up there, my brother and I went. Oh, this was kind of exciting, huh? You throw in a dime, you make five dollars.

(Laughter)

So then I started work and we used to go up for the weekend with the other friends. They all moved back [to Hawai'i] now. One is retired in Pearl City. Another retired in Mililani. So we talk on the phone every once in a while.

WN: So you told me when you were in Gardena, which is near Watts, right about that time, [19]65, there were the riots.

WT: Watts riots.

WN: What do you remember about that?

WT: You know, we were near the riot, but it didn't come to where I lived. But you could see, watching TV, and they're talking from the helicopter, and you could see the helicopter flying around. You know what I mean? So I was there when it happened, but I didn't see any bad stuff. That's all I know.

WN: And what was Gardena like at that time?

WT: Gardena, it was noted as being a lot of Japanese there. Asians. Other than sleeping in the house or going to work, we didn't go out in the town. We went shopping and that's about it. They used to play softball. Up in LA there was a big Hawai'i league and they had different levels of softball. So when it was softball season, I just used to tag along with the guys. Some of them participated. Me, I was a fan. I was just watching. Other than making the trips to Vegas or going to see the sporting events, we went fishing couple, three, four times. We would go down to the beach. One time I was on a rowboat right down the beach and I heard this guy talking. You know, I knew the guy was from Hawai'i. So as we rowed closer, shoot, the guy used to live on Lāna'i!

(Laughter)

He had moved to the Mainland in the early [19]50s.

WN: So you knew him back then?

WT: I knew who he was. But he, being older, we weren't friends, but I knew his name.

WN: (Chuckles) That's funny. So you were in Gardena until [19]66?

WT: I think so. I came back, I forget the year.

WN: I think you told me [19]67, you moved back to Lāna'i.

WT: Yes.

WN: What happened?

WT: Well, I was ready to come home already. My father called me and said he wanted me to come home and help him because he had just opened—he just took over the four-lane bowling alley and the theater. So he said he needed help in the store.

WN: Wait, now. How far away was this from the store?

WT: Right across the street.

WN: The theater and the bowling alley?

WT: Bowling alley was right across the street. The theater was right across the park.

WN: By Dole Park.

WT: Yes. So he said he needed help, and at that time I was ready to come back. I had developed ulcers, too. I don't know why.

WN: You were only like about thirty years old, huh?

WT: Yes, but I don't know. I just had this burning sensation in my stomach. So not knowing about medical stuff or doctors, there was a bowling alley in Gardena. It just said Dr. so-and-so. I just saw "Dr." and I just walked in. You know what? It was a gynecologist.

(Laughter)

The lady kind of smiled at me and said, "Oh, no, you need to see a different kind of doctor."

(Laughter)

So she recommended me to another doctor in Gardena. This guy was a Chinese guy. He had graduated from Roosevelt High School. So he took care of me. Then I came home. I had treatment in Honolulu.

WN: So you said you were ready to come home, so [19]67, you came home. How did your father feel about that?

WT: My father? Oh, he was happy when I came home to help him. In the meantime, my brother had come back, too. He was going to school in Honolulu. But he used to come home on weekends to help out.

WN: So this is a big decision for you right now, right? You sort of saw Honolulu, you saw parts of the Mainland. Now you're making the big move back to Lāna'i. What was that like as far as how you were thinking at that time?

WT: It's time to come home, help the old folks. That's my only thought. I don't know if I thought I'd move on after a few years. Maybe it was in the back of my mind, but I didn't know. Then I met Nancy. We got married in 1968. I went up to Buffalo.

WN: Buffalo, New York?

WT: Yes. Only me.

WN: She's from Buffalo?

WT: She's from Buffalo, New York. At the wedding the guests were mostly family.

WN: How did you folks meet?

WT: She came to teach on Lāna'i. After the first year, she wasn't coming back. But then her friend told her it wasn't fair for her not to come back. So I met her the second year that she came back. So then we got married in [19]68.

WN: So then when you came back, where did you live?

WT: Our first home was right next to the store. There was a—I don't know if you know Mrs. Irene Perry?

WN: Yeah.

WT: She owned that house, but she was living in Honolulu. So we rented that house. I think we stayed one or two years. Because we moved here in 1971.

- WN: Oh, this house?
- WT: Yes. So I think we stayed there two years. We were the first in this area. The first choice to get a house in this area were the people employed by Dole [Corporation]. Then they wanted to sell to the government, like police.
- WN: Government workers?
- WT: Fish and Game. A nurse had a house up here. Then us, non-employees. Nancy did all the stuff. We've been in here since 1971.
- WN: I was wondering, not being a company employee, was there like a status system there in terms of if you work for the company, you get certain kinds of privileges and if you don't, you don't?
- WT: Well, you know, in the [19]50s, after the strike, the company started to sell off the homes. You look back now, it was cheap—\$800, \$900. Bigger home, maybe couple thousand.
- WN: House and lot?
- WT: House and lot. Fee simple. But the company employees always naturally, they had first choice. But it was never offered to non-employees. Like even if my father was here for, at that time maybe twenty-five years, he was not offered. Some guys got away with it by having a friend or somebody they knew buy the house. They would front them the money. Them guys, when they went back to the old country, the house belonged to the guy who fronted the money. But I think my father wasn't smart enough to do that or he didn't have the money. That's what I thought. So for him, he always lived in the company-owned home until they opened the second increment down here. Then he bought his house.
- WN: And when you bought over here you said you were the first.
- WT: Yes, in this area, this street, there was the first increment of Lālākoa. So myself—next door is the Fish and Game, state owned. Next door was a schoolteacher. Two houses owned by the police department or county.
- WN: So this area was mostly non-company people?
- WT: And the teachers owned two houses over here, too. So two, four, five, six—six houses over here are owned by government [workers].
- WN: Now, if you were a company employee and you wanted to buy here. . . .
- WT: You could.
- WN: Would you have gotten a better deal?
- WT: You had first choice.
- WN: You had first choice?
- WT: But lucky for us, there weren't too many takers.
- WN: Was this considered more desirable possibly then, say, living downtown area?

- WT: No. Do you know why there weren't too many takers? It went from where they used to buy [homes] for \$8[00], \$900 to couple thousand, at the most \$3,000. Over here went to \$20[000] something.
- WN: Oh. This is in the [19]70s, huh?
- WT: Yes. So that was, "Boy, they're crazy, buying over there." You know?
- WN: (Chuckles) It was more because it was later on, right? Seventies already.
- WT: Yes. And a lot of them had their own houses already. Some, they owned two houses, right? Guys like us, we weren't offered any at all until the last choice.
- WN: So in the early days, though, the company workers were allowed to live in the houses provided by the company.
- WT: They had to pay rent.
- WN: Yeah, there was a time, though, when they could buy . . .
- WT: Yes, after the strike, they offered the employees to buy. Many years later, they sold to non-employees who were already occupants. But not all the houses. Like Neal's [WT's cousin, Neal Tamashiro] father, he lived on the other side, he lived in that house for a long time. They offered him to buy and he bought. I don't know who else. Some others. In the meantime, they had vacant lots. They built homes on them and sold those, too.
- WN: So you said some of these company guys have two houses because they could buy really cheap.
- WT: After the strike they bought a home. Then [when] this place opened, they could [buy]. So when they moved here, they also had the other house. More power to them.
- WN: Is that still the case now?
- WT: Now, some of them in the last few years, they offered the same thing. They could buy. But I don't know the price. Actually, now, you're just buying the property, right? The house all might be junk. So from time to time, they offer it to the [former] employees, the older tenants.
- WN: So when you came back to Lānaʻi [19]67, and you were gone kind of long time, I mean, you were coming back here and there, but you . . .
- WT: Yes, to permanently stay.
- WN: Permanently stay. Now, what kind of changes did you notice when you came here to the store and Lānaʻi in general if you remember?
- WT: Ho, when you're in that environment, you make changes but it doesn't have a real impact. When I first came back, pineapple [employees] had a different kind of spending [habit], the people. The customers were all the old-timers, way older than me. So it was almost the same. But when they started to develop the hotels, the construction people came in, and that was a different group of people. I think wage-wise, was a higher-paying wage. So the way the people spent money was different. Then the younger guys started to come, like Lānaʻi people who went [away] and then came back during the construction [boom]. They came back and I guess you can say their wants

were different from the old-timers. Like, we sold different kinds of snacks, different stuff. Of course, the volume increased for our business. Sales went up. It's just like, [David] Murdock was a godsend for us as a business owner.

WN: So you're talking about in the [19]80s.

WT: Well, the hotels opened in [19]89, so he must have started in [19]85, maybe, construction. So from [19]60s when I came back, to about [19]85, wasn't too much change. The population remained the same, about, what, 2,100, 2,200? School enrollment was about the same. Hardly any tourists. In fact, just like no tourists.

WN: Had only one hotel . . .

WT: Ten-room hotel.

WN: Hotel Lāna'i.

WT: Yes. We operated that place; I forgot what years already. I think, in the [19]70s, for five years we operated. But we hardly had [Mainland] tourists. Everything was the same. Student enrollment was about the same, too, I think. You knew who the new residents were. How easy, you know. (WT and WN chuckle.) Now, you cannot tell who's new.

WN: So as far as the store, how did operations of the store, besides selling new kinds of things, how had that changed?

WT: Well, we sold almost the same thing, but we sold more of the same things because more people were coming in. Of course, we had more *haole* customers come in, residents. So their wants were kind of different, too. Like half-and-half cream, sour cream, cottage cheese. Those items. You had to be aware of those. Other cheese products. Being a small operator, you only had access to one big grocery wholesaler, so all the general stuff. They didn't have any specialty foods. But people used to come in and ask for specialty items. We try to get it, but I know in my mind, the guys I was buying from, didn't have it. (WN chuckles.) For me to open an account with a really specialty distributor, I didn't have the volume to buy. Why would I buy and not be able to sell the products?

WN: What's an example of a specialty item?

WT: Well, various cheeses.

WN: Oh, I see. Cheese.

WT: Like the regular grocery wholesaler, they only had certain kinds.

WN: Like Velveeta (laughs).

WT: Even some meat items. The best thing maybe for us is, oh, we can get it: hop on the ferry [to Maui], go Safeway, buy, bring 'em back. (Chuckles)

WN: You guys did that?

WT: If they were willing to pay, sometimes one or two times. Not jump on the boat, but, "Hey, you going [to Maui] tomorrow? Buy something for me." Not cheap, but you're accommodating the

customer who can afford it. A friend of mine working in a supermarket in Honolulu, drives in his car, goes to another supermarket, buys the stuff. I would tell him, "Give 'em to the customer."

WN: (Chuckles) I guess if they could afford it.

WT: But at that time we were operating, up to [19]80-something, was stable, the population.

WN: We were talking once in the car about charge. How has that changed? I mean, you were talking, when you were a kid how your father would open charge accounts with anyone who came because they were with the company and so forth. How has that changed when you don't know them, all the customers . . .

WT: That's why, when the hotels started to develop, I talked to my brothers. We decided to stop the charges for everyone. Because we weren't capable of having credit checks for the new guys. When outside people started to come, they're coming here from all over the place. So once we stopped everybody, no discrimination, we stopped everybody except for other businesses or like the school or hospital. But we accepted credit cards. But when we were still in the [19]70s, credit card wasn't that popular.

WN: You're talking about Visa, Mastercard?

WT: Yes, we went into the credit cards. That way, we didn't have to check anybody's credit, right? As long as the card was good. So when I started that, I lost business because our competitor, Pine Isle [Market], was still doing what we were doing. Everybody, all the businesses, were charging. So I think about a year later, they followed.

WN: So in your father's time, charge meant you open an account with the store.

WT: Right.

WN: Then you get your goods and you get billed later on.

WT: Right, right. Say, at the 25th day of the month, that was the end of that month. Then you go into a new month from the 26th.

WN: Right, right.

WT: Actually, thirty days. But it wasn't the calendar month.

WN: Right, right. So it's better to go buy at the store on the 26th because you can be charged the following month.

WT: Well, the first charge within that thirty-day period.

WN: Interesting. Because during your father's time, it's built on knowing the people, trust, so-and-so's related to so-and-so. Then when you took over, that gradually had to change.

WT: Yes.

WN: So you said some people went over to Pine Isle. Did anybody give you bad time, like, "Ey, come on."

- WT: No, not really. Well, changing was to my advantage and the customers. If they chose to go to the competitor, oh okay, I couldn't do anything about that. But a year later, they [Pine Isle Market] stopped their charges, too. It's all cash-and-carry now, credit card.
- WN: That's a big change, when you think about it.
- WT: You know, the change was the hardest part for me, to make the change after you were brought up like that, charge.
- WN: Yeah, right.
- WT: Charge and deliver. You deliver a loaf of bread to the guy's house, put the bill underneath the bread, that's his copy. But we grew up like that. The change itself was the hardest part, making the change.
- WN: So nobody said, "Hey, was this way when you knew my father . . ."
- WT: No, nobody, I tell you. Nobody. It's just like people respected your decision, but they can say, "Oh, I going someplace else." And some customers said, "Oh, about time."
- WN: So this is about the [19]70s when you were doing this? Or later.
- WT: Eighties.
- WN: Oh, [19]80s, okay.
- WT: Yeah. Maybe about '85, I changed.
- WN: Okay. Let's get into this. You had Dole which was pretty much running the island until Castle & Cooke sort of . . .
- WT: Well, when it was pineapple, they didn't bother us too much. The rent was more than fair. But when the real estate people came in, it kind of like changed because they're not in the pineapple business. They're in real estate.
- WN: You're talking about Murdock and Castle & Cooke . . .
- WT: No, before Murdock came in.
- WN: Oh, okay.
- WT: Before Murdock came in, Castle & Cooke had brought in the real estate part of their business.
- WN: Ah. That's the Lānaʻi Company?
- WT: Yes, yes. But even when they came in, the rent was fair. Then gradually they increased it over a period of time. In fact, when we first took over the Hotel [Lānaʻi], we agreed to 10 percent off the top for rent plus the initial upfront minimum rental. After so many months of operating, I looked at the accounting. We had a five-year lease. But we were ready to chuck it in. I talked to the president at that time who was here on Lānaʻi, Don Rietow, from 10 percent, he cut it down to about 3 [percent], I believe. I think it was 3, but I cannot remember. But then it was okay. We made money, but too much job.

WN: What made you take over the hotel?

WT: They asked us to.

WN: Who's "they"?

WT: The company.

WN: Oh, the company.

WT: I don't know why they asked us. I think the tenants at that time were giving up, so they asked us if we wanted to take over. We said, "Okay." Well, they didn't talk to me. My father was still, you know. But see, my father, too, he said yes, but we got to do all the work. (WN chuckles.) He was in the bowling alley and the theater.

WN: Oh, he still had that?

WT: Yes, we had that, too. It was a twenty-year deal. So at one time, we had the store, the bowling alley, the theater, and the hotel. We used to close the store at 5:30, so I used to leave about 6:00 or 6:15, come home, eat with the kids. But I always used to look out the door at how many cars were in front of all the businesses. In a way, that hotel, we were trying to accommodate guests who were—you know what I mean? They kind of like saw our point where we couldn't fill the rooms up. Only ten rooms now. Hard to fill up the rooms. Only on weekends maybe. Other days, only few were occupied. The room rental was only about twenty-two dollars [a night]. Maybe we weren't smart enough.

WN: (Chuckles) So like what kind of people stayed? Was mostly Honolulu people?

WT: Yes, they came for business. And company guys, overnight. Salesmen. Some visitors from the Mainland.

WN: So how long did you have that hotel?

WT: Five years.

WN: From in the [19]70s? Or [19]80s?

WT: You know, I think it was from [19]79 to about [19]84 or [19]85. Just before Murdock took over, we went out. Alberta de Jetley took it over with her husband. Because the husband, de Jetley, was managing the Hotel Hāna [Maui]. So they came over and they took over the lease from us. Then after her, I think the company took it back.

WN: What about the bowling alley and the. . . .

WT: The bowling alley, we gave up in. . . . Must have been twenty years. Gee, I don't know when we gave up the bowling alley. I guess, in the [19]80s.

WN: So when you came back in the [19]60s to Lānaʻi, you guys had the store, . . .

WT: [Nineteen] sixty-seven.

WN: . . . the bowling alley, and the theater?

WT: Yeah.

WN: But not the hotel?

WT: No, no.

WN: I see. And of the three, what was the best moneymaker?

WT: None. We survived. (WN chuckles.) I tell you the truth.

WN: Well, what was the best then . . .

WT: We made enough money to keep on operating. So what was the best?

WN: Yeah.

WT: Was the pinball machine. Was all cash.

(Laughter)

WN: This was where? Bowling alley?

WT: Yes, in the bowling alley we had about four or five machines, but they didn't belong to us. Was from this guy, [Hiroshi] "Moloka'i" Oshiro. He used to run the service station [Oshiro Service Station]. The take was a split, with all the nickels going in the machine. (Chuckles) I don't know if he was the owner. I don't think he was the owner. Maybe he was the agent on Lāna'i, but I'm not sure. But this guy from Maui, the former—he was our neighbor, but he moved to Maui—he used to come and take out the money. So did Mr. Moloka'i.

WN: So was 50-50 split?

WT: I think it was 60-40.

(Laughter)

No, but we had the snack shop in the bowling alley, too. So we were profitable, but not earthshaking.

WN: So how many employees did you have total from these four establishments?

WT: Well, I think the bowling alley, at least about four or five. Not at one time, maybe. Because there was a pool hall, too. Billiards.

WN: Oh, in the bowling alley?

WT: About four or five tables. Four alleys. The snack shop in the bowling alley. Then we had the store. The theater, we used to get films from Consolidated [Amusement Co.] a year later. My brother, Collin, when he came back, he used to operate the projector. He made a rule: if we don't have twenty customers, no more show.

(Laughter)

At one time, my father was giving out coupons. If you pay cash at the store, you get one free movie ticket. People had so many movie tickets.

(Laughter)

WT: The movies were so old, you know . . .

WN: If had nineteen people sitting in there, had to just tell 'em go?

WT: Yes, he said he made the rule. If we don't have so-many people, there's no show. But that's the kind of times we were living in. Now when you make that kind of rule, you get shot. (WN laughs.) They sue you or something.

WN: This was American movies?

WT: Yes, American movies from Consolidated.

WN: But you didn't have like Japanese or Filipino movies?

WT: At one time they had. But it kind of died off, that kind of stuff.

WN: Who was your bookkeeper? Who ran the books for all these establishments, for the businesses?

WT: This guy named Masaru Kido. He was one of the few last remaining public accountants in Honolulu. So he kept all our books. He's a Lānaʻi person. He educated himself through a correspondence course. At one time he was working in the store, but he said my father couldn't afford him already. His family moved to Honolulu. He was a accountant for Bacon Company, the heavy-equipment place in Honolulu. Then he went on his own. He started his own business.

WN: Did you folks have titles, you and your brothers? Who was the president?

WT: Oh, I had to be the president. (Chuckles) But it's only on paper. We incorporated in 1967. Before, was sole proprietorship, my father. But then when I came home, we incorporated. I was president, my brother was vice president/secretary, and my other brother became treasurer. So board of directors, I guess, was my father and us.

You know, our rent was month-to-month. It didn't bother us. But when some of these people heard we were month-to-month, they couldn't believe it. So that was one of the arguments against the company. Hey, these guys, they only getting month-to-month. It was a big deal, right? I didn't know. I thought that was the way. I'm kind of naive, I guess. But being on Lānaʻi, that was it. Month-to-month rent. Then on my last, I think I got a twenty-year lease. They gave me a twenty-year lease. Just sign the paper. I let one of the kind of high-profile guys in Honolulu look over the lease. He didn't see a problem with it. So I signed the lease, twenty years. Then we decided to quit, was before the end of the lease.

WN: So you quit in [20]06, but you signed the lease.

WT: Going back twenty years.

WN: But you didn't quit because the lease ran out?

- WT: No, no. I didn't quit because the lease was finished. We just wanted to get out. When I used to hear about these guys getting burned out when they were in their fifties or sixties, I was thinking, I don't know what they were talking about. But when we wanted to get out, I looked at my brother one day and said, "*Ey*, time to quit."
- WN: Before we get into that, I just wanted to ask you about when Murdock took over and the emphasis was, you know, pineapple was pretty much gone by then or dying already. How was that? How was operating a store, living on Lānaʻi under those Murdock years?
- WT: You know, I don't know if I mentioned this, but Murdock was our savior for us, the businesses, when he started the hotels.
- WN: You mean, [The Lodge at] Kōʻele and Mānele [Bay Hotel]?
- WT: Yes. Because he had the construction workers coming in and other workers. Beside construction workers, you had other people coming in, former Lanaians that were given jobs, too, you know what I mean? So the population increased. That's what made it for us. More people. He was the one that brought them in because of his so-called vision for Lānaʻi, making the hotel construction.
- WN: So you're talking about construction workers and tourists coming in.
- WT: At that time, construction workers only because the hotels didn't open until—[The Lodge at] Kōʻele didn't open until '91, I think. Not the tourists, it was the workers, the employees, working in the tourist industry.
- WN: Where did they live? Construction workers.
- WT: Oh, they had a camp, Quonset huts, down at Mānele. Whatever houses they could find up here. At one time, we had workers living next door, too.
- WN: How long did they stay at one time? Did they stay through the whole term of building these hotels?
- WT: Yes, but they used to come and go. I don't know what the deal was about. Aloha Airlines used to fly in the workers and fly 'em out. I think it was every other week. Then they lived down the Quonset huts at Mānele. Oh, and they had the dorms, log cabins, over here. You know where the apartment complex is now?
- WN: Yeah.
- WT: They had leftover pineapple [worker] dorms, log-cabin types. They stayed in there. So the workers were the economy of all Lānaʻi, whoever was working on Lānaʻi. Because you had more of them.
- WN: And they shopped? They went to your store?
- WT: No, no. Well, they had the cafeteria, like that. But they came to buy booze and *pūpū*, like that.
- WN: What about the bowling alley and the theater?

- WT: Oh, no. By then we were out of it already. The guys who took over from us was out of it, too. So it was only the building there for a while. It wasn't a business already during that time of construction.
- WN: I'm sure the presence of all these construction people was good for the economy. How was it in terms of the social makeup of the island?
- WT: Well, they had problems, I guess. But how can I say it? You hear about the problems—drugs, whatnot—but you just say, well, that's what it was.
- WN: What about when people say, "In the old days, we didn't have to lock our doors." Did you feel it was less security, you know, now when the . . .
- WT: Well, those days, when they say you don't have to lock their doors and guys get their house broken into by another Lāna'i guy, that's up to them. I used to lock my door anyway. So you can leave your door open going out. Not every time you go out you lock the door. But came to a time that everybody had to lock their doors.
- WN: So there's a time when the construction [workers] made up a large part of the Lāna'i population, and then when the hotels were finished in the early [19]90s, did it change again? Was it less construction, more tourists?
- WT: Oh, yeah, then the tourists came in. Construction workers all weren't around. But still the company itself had construction workers and the hotel workers at Kō'e and Mānele. There were more [hotel] workers than pineapple workers. The tourists, I think, we didn't have the so-called tourist customers. As long as the people were gainfully employed, they could shop and whatnot. The tourists would browse around in the store, but they weren't the buyers.
- WN: So it was more the employees that were coming in from Honolulu . . .
- WT: They had work, you know. Yes.
- WN: And people came from all over the state? I mean, Honolulu, Maui . . .
- WT: You mean, the workers?
- WN: Yeah.
- WT: Well, I guess they did, but I don't know how many. You know, they had different workers come in. A lot came and went. Then they had the really big downturn that Murdock started to lay off a lot of people, I guess when the economy really started to turn sour. We went out the right time, I thought.
- WN: So about that time, there's a lot of negativism associated with Murdock. I know when Ellison bought the island, lot of people were very happy. What was going on? What was wrong at the late stages of Murdock's time here?
- WT: Well, I'm not an activist. I don't want to come out now because I didn't say anything before. But I'm kind of tolerant, too. I mean, give and take. I'm not that passionate, let's say. Like the windmills. If it goes, it goes. If it doesn't—and I don't think it's going—so. You know, I'm not going there and hold up a sign. And I wasn't fired by Murdock, too. So like I say, he was the one

that brought in all the business. I mean, boosted the economy for us. But I didn't have any dealings with him. The only time was when he called my house and said that he wanted to buy the business. I said, "Okay, fine." Because I knew he had the money to pay me.

WN: This is in [20]06?

WT: This was on January 2, 2006. He called and he said, "Mr. Tamashiro? I understand you want to sell your business." I had to put the phone like this. My family was here sitting down.

WN: (Chuckles) Oh, he talked so loud.

WT: I said, "Okay." (Chuckles) So I went to talk to the guy I was talking to. I say, "You know what? I'm going to sell it to Murdock because it's the best for me." I wasn't going to say I worked all these years and not get what I thought was best for me.

WN: Did you get some criticism from people?

WT: No, I didn't. If any criticism, I say, "Hey, that's my life."

WN: When you say "sell the business," what did that entail?

WT: Oh, that entailed only the inventory, the equipment, the moveable equipment.

WN: He owned the building anyway.

WT: Yes, because we wanted to get out so bad that I wouldn't say I made it cheap for him because he could afford anything at that time. But we just wanted to get out so we sold him the inventory and couple of vehicles we had. The buildings all belonged to him. We couldn't take away the improvements. He bought whatever we had on paper.

WN: How was the store, the business, run after that?

WT: Oh, they had their own people. At that time, we asked Murdock if my brother could still be working, the youngest one. But he [Murdock] retained all the workers. Then he brought in the management people. He brought in some other people, Lāna'i residents. I don't know anything about what's going on now.

WN: But were there any drastic changes to how the business was run after he took over?

WT: Well, you know, when we were running it, we had lot of dry goods stuff. They did away with a lot. Lot of small stuff that people needed not every day but certain times that we kind of stocked. It wasn't selling fast, but we always stocked them. At one time I used to sell patterns for sewing, but I gave that up because there were hardly any sewers on the island. I used to sell more clothing than what they have now. Not the high-end type, but just like everyday kind of [items] like t-shirts. Whatever I thought of, you know, the basics. Towels. Just knickknacks, all different kind . . .

WN: So it more or less changed to more of a grocery store?

WT: Mostly grocery. Then the hardware store opened. Before I used to carry hardware and fishing supplies. You know, like in garden, fertilizers. They still do, but I think we had more variety. More different kinds of garden stuff and hardware, too.

- WN: How did your competition fare? Like for example, Pine Isle [Market]. What direction did they go?
- WT: I don't know. (Chuckles)
- WN: So Murdock bought you guys in 2006?
- WT: Yes.
- WN: Pine Isle still remained . . .
- WT: Well, he still is independent.
- WN: Oh, he's still independent?
- WT: Yeah, he's owned by himself.
- WN: What about International [Food and Clothing Center]?
- WT: They own their own store. The only company-owned store—company-owned, now—is Richard's Market.
- WN: Richard's. You guys.
- WT: They still kept the name—Richard's. My father was still happy, I guess.
- WN: When did your father pass away?
- WT: That's a very embarrassing question, you know, Warren. I forgot already. He was, okay, 85, I think, when he died. He would be 101 this year.
- WN: Oh, okay. So he was born in nineteen. . . .
- WT: Fifteen years or sixteen years since he died.
- WN: He was born 1912, then.
- WT: About that.
- WN: Okay. And he died at age eighty-five?
- WT: About eighty-five, yes.
- WN: Okay. And you said your mother died earlier?
- WT: Yes, a few years earlier.
- WN: Okay. Well, we're just about done. I want to ask you, you know, you have a new owner. Just bought the island. What do you think the future of the island is going to be in your opinion?
- WT: I don't know. I just got to remain positive.

WN: Like what?

WT: Well, that we have a growing economy. You know why? If we don't have a growing economy, how can the older guys get the benefits like medical, you know? I just hope the airfare doesn't go up too much. Because we still got to depend on special medical help. I mean, you got to go off island no matter what.

WN: Yet, would you like to see Lānaʻi be like Kīhei or Lahaina?

WT: No, no, no. That's the part. How they develop this place without being like a place you don't want to go to. Like you mentioned like a Kīhei or Lahaina. It's terrific now, right, over here?

WN: Yeah.

WT: Hardly any traffic. If you see ten cars go by, that's, ho, long wait. (WN chuckles.) But for us seniors, we can get on the ferry for twenty dollars, roundtrip.

WN: Your daughters both don't live here. But would you like them to come back and live here?

WT: My daughters? No, well, what they're doing in their life now, I don't think they can find the same occupation on Lānaʻi. One of my daughters, the husband and her bought a house in the Volcano area. So they might move to the Big Island in five years. But she can always get a job, so it's not a concern job-wise. But the other two, not at this time. There's nothing here for them to do.

WN: So what are your early reviews of what's going on with Ellison? Is it a good direction? You don't have to answer this, but just . . .

WT: I just know what I read in the paper and what I hear from what Kurt Matsumoto has mentioned in his public presentations. So everything looks and sounds good. I hope maybe all the good stuff comes to reality. But I don't know, if I had a glass ball, maybe I can make a better prediction, but I don't know.

WN: One last question. Aside from the time you spent in Honolulu and in Gardena and so forth, you're a Lānaʻi boy. What does that mean to say you're from Lānaʻi?

WT: Just to say I'm from Lānaʻi. That's it.

WN: Do you say it proudly or do you—you know what I mean? Like "Wally, where you from?"

WT: Well, just a statement, I'm from Lānaʻi. I notice my wife, when we go to someplace off island, she always says, "Oh, we're from Lānaʻi." To her, I think it's really special. But to me, yeah, I live on Lānaʻi, I'm from Lānaʻi. I can say now I'm one of the few people my age born on Lānaʻi.

WN: That are still [living on the island].

WT: Most of my classmates went out already. After high school, they all went out. Not only my age people, almost all of the people went out. But I notice more of the people now, the kids, because of the hotel work, they're kind of like staying back. I don't know how many if you go back from today. But our time, all my cousins, like Neal said today, all his siblings are out. Only he is on Lānaʻi. Probably if he can take the golf course with him, he would move, too. (WN chuckles.)

At one time, couple years ago, we were just sitting here and I said, “Nancy, we should move to Honolulu.” I went to see the real estate person, “Sell our house.” But a month or two later, I said, “No, cancel everything.” I don’t know why we decided at that time. But the more and more you go out and come home, you appreciate Lāna‘i more. So sometimes I go to Honolulu for two days and I’m thinking, well, I want to go home already. But well, besides the doctor [appointments], see family, and shop, if you’re not interested in doing different kinds of stuff—I don’t know what, but—no difference. It’s easier to get out over here. No more traffic. It doesn’t take you too much time to find parking. You don’t go eat out as much as if you lived in Honolulu where everything is so easy to go to.

WN: Okay, well . . .

WT: We’re done, Warren?

WN: I think we’re done. Thank you very much, Wally.

END OF INTERVIEW

Lāna‘i:

Reflecting on the Past; Bracing for the Future

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